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Lucia A Keegan 08/02/2006 03:08:23 PM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Israel-Hezbollah Conflict - Iran's
Involvement - Israel's Isolation - U.S. - France Diplomacy Efforts
PARIS - Tuesday, August 01, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Israel-Hezbollah Conflict - Iran's Involvement - Israel's Isolation
- U.S. - France Diplomacy Efforts

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Diplomatic efforts to reach a ceasefire in Lebanon dominate today news. Le Figaro's front page, "Diplomatic Efforts During the Lull in Lebanon," introduces several stories including the headline, "Condoleezza Rice Believes in a Ceasefire." La Croix's headline reads: "Israel Under Pressure from the Americans" and Liberation headlines, "Israel Under Pressure." In Le Parisien FM Douste-Blazy, who was in Beirut, says: "We must move very fast..." He is again quoted as saying: "If France had been heard in Rome, the Cana tragedy would not have happened..." Le Figaro reporting on FM Douste-Blazy's visit to Beirut notes his meeting with Iran's FM and

quotes him: "Iran plays a stabilizing role" ... "and is an important actor in the Middle East." Le Parisien's cover story looks at Iran's formal entry onto the Israeli-Lebanese scene with Iranian FM Manouchehr Mottaki's arrival in Beirut yesterday. According to Le Parisien, "The Iranian regime has established for the first time-explicitly-a link between the war in Lebanon and its desire to possess the bomb." Iran's role in the conflict is also analyzed in an op-ed by defense researcher Louis Chagnon in Le Figaro, in which suggests that the way out is "to topple the Islamic regime in Iran." (See Part C)

The editorials in Le Figaro and Liberation emphasize Israel's growing isolation after the Cana tragedy, but Le Figaro's Luc de Barochez warns against "rejoicing over Israel's weakening" in the face of Iran's role in the conflict. (See Part C)

Separately, Le Figaro runs an AFP report on the UN's passage yesterday of a Security Council Resolution giving Iran until August 31 to suspend all uranium enrichment activity subject to IAEA verification.

La Croix's cover story focuses on the U.S. role in the Israeli-Lebanese conflict under the headline "Israel under American Pressure." La Croix attributes Israel's 48-hour suspension of hostilities to pressure from Secretary of State Rice. But a report in Liberation comments on "the U.S. double game at the UN." "Rice's stance in favor of a ceasefire and a peace plan... is an optimistic signal, considering the growing tension at the UN... There is a difference between France's call for 'an immediate halt to the hostilities' and America's call for 'an urgent' but not an immediate ceasefire..." A La Croix article is entitled "French Diplomacy Seeks a Solution in Beirut." "For French officials, an immediate cease-fire and a political accord are the prerequisites of any international stabilization force-under the auspices of the UN-in which France would participate. Meanwhile, London and Washington want unconditionally to send an international force through NATO." La Croix quotes PM Villepin as saying an international force would risk becoming "inoperable" and seeing "extremely dangerous terrain" in the absence of a political accord.

Le Figaro interviews Zbigniew Brzezinski about Secretary Rice's visit to the Middle East: "America's doings in this crisis have unfortunately contributed to the loss of life and to anti-Americanism... Secretary Rice must go to Damascus... The Bush and Rice policy of ostracizing Syria may be a big success for them, but it is a disaster for the U.S.... It is unfortunate, but Europe does not exist as a political entity..." On Iraq he says: "we are close to a civil war here... America's presence is increasingly destroying Iraq as a state... But unfortunately, because President Bush lives in his own world cut off from reality, American troops will probably stay in Iraq..."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Israel-Hezbollah Conflict - Iran's Involvement - Israel's Isolation - U.S. - France Diplomacy Efforts

"Israel's Reversal"

Luc de Barochez in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/01): "Israel has an historic image as a winner of wars. But although it is normal to destroy Hezbollah's engines of death, it is totally inadmissible to kill children... even if, as Israel well knows, Hezbollah has a habit of using women and children as human shields... Iran supports Hezbollah, as part of its confrontation with the West in general and the U.S. in particular... But there is no reason to rejoice in Israel's isolation and weakening in the face of Iran... Franco-American rivalries must not impede the finding of a solution... Lebanon was wrong to have cancelled Secretary Rice's visit, for only the U.S. is in a position to impose its views in the Middle East... Diplomacy needs to show it can be imaginative if it wants to transform a military campaign into a political victory."

"Isolation"

Antoine de Gaudemar in left-of-center Liberation (08/01): "Israel is growing more isolated on the international scene. After the Cana tragedy, indignation has reached two of its staunchest allies, the U.S. and Great Britain... But Israel, which can rely on international disagreement, does not want to give Hezbollah the

illusion of a victory. Israel knows that Hezbollah is Iran's tool in its anti-Semitic diatribes... But Israel, because of its intransigence, could be taking the risk of further isolation... And although Hezbollah has been striking civilians in Israel, it has won the war of images, those images of dead children in Cana."

"Toppling Iran's Islamic Regime Is Only Durable Solution"

Louis Chagnon, Defense Specialist, in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/01: "Iran wants the bomb, and it will get it... And Hezbollah is Iran's tool to threaten Israel... For the time being, Iran does not have the means to directly threaten Israel... Iran arms and finances Hezbollah... And while the world looks towards Lebanon, Iran continues on the path of the nuclear bomb. It is also widening its regional influence in places like Turkmenistan and Tajikistan... Iran wants to be and is becoming a power that cannot be disregarded. This would be a perfectly legitimate position if Iran were not governed by fundamentalist Islamic terrorists, who by playing with fire, could trigger a very wide ranging war. Meanwhile, the present conflict, like all conflicts in the region, plays into Iran's financial hands... because of Iran's position as an oil nation... In short, the Mullahs' regime, which feeds on the war, has every advantage to seeing the Lebanese-Israeli conflict last. Sending a UN peacekeeping force is simply unrealistic. The only durable solution is to topple Iran's Islamic regime and for the West to support Iran's democratic opposition. Syria, which does not possess Iran's financial oil means, would then be isolated and its bellicose stance would be greatly contained." STAPLETON